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ABSTRACT

Historically, efforts to educate American Indians have focused on "civilizing" and assimilating Indians into White society. During the early 1970s, Congress passed legislation encouraging self-determination of tribes in educational matters. Despite changes brought about by the Self-Determination Act, testimony at Indian Nations at Risk Task Force hearings in 1990 and 1991 indicated many Native students still attend schools that fail to promote appropriate academic, social, cultural, and spiritual development. They also found that schools that respect and support students' language and culture are significantly more successful in educating those students. Training for teachers of Native students should cover the sociocultural and historical foundations of Indian education, instructional methods and styles suitable to Native students, bilingual and English as a Second Language methods, culturally relevant curriculum, and whole language and whole math approaches. The Task Force declared four national priorities: (1) developing parent-based and culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate early childhood education; (2) making the promotion of students' language and culture a responsibility of the school; (3) training more Native teachers; and (4) strengthening tribal colleges. In addition, they adopted 10 national Indian education goals addressing such things as literacy; achievement; graduation rates; adult education; and parental, community, and tribal partnerships. (KS)

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American Indian/Alaska Native Education

Jon Reyhner

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American Indian/ Alaska Native Education

by
Jon Reyhner

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Introduction

After four centuries of precipitous population decline to a low of about 237,000 in 1900, American Indian and Alaska Native populations in the United States began to increase at the turn of the century. That increase now is accelerating. According to the U.S. Census, the Native population of the United States doubled between 1970 and 1990, from one million to almost two million. Half of this population lives in urban areas and less than a third on reservations.

These 1,959,000 Native Americans represent some 500 different tribes, each with its own unique culture, and 200 surviving languages. But as this population increases, American Indian languages and cultures are in danger of being lost, partly as a result of federal and state education policies over most of the last two centuries that called for the "Americanization" of Indian students.

A note on terminology is necessary here. I will follow the terminology chosen by the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force. They preferred to use the term *American Indian/Alaska Native* for the initial reference to the indigenous people of North America and thereafter to use the short form *Native*. However, because of the historical use of terms such as *Indian* and *Native American*, I will use the terms somewhat interchangeably, especially the term *American Indian* or its short form *Indian* when it is clear that Alaska Natives are not being included for geographic reasons.

In the early 1970s Indian activism, part of the Civil Rights Movement, created an atmosphere that led to the passage of the 1972 Indian Education Act and the 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. Self-determination is the idea that Indian people, not the U.S. government, should decide what is best for Indian America. This concept survived a subsequent decline in federal funding, but Native Americans are still uncertain what self-determination will ultimately mean for Indian people and Indian education.

There recently has been a revival of the interest in Indian education that matches the interest shown in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Evidence of this revival includes the Native American Languages Act of 1990, the release of the final report of the U.S. Secretary of Education's Indian Nations at Risk Task Force in 1991, and the White House Conference on Indian Education in 1992. This revival of interest is part of a recurring historical cycle. Today, in contrast to past episodes of concern, Indian people, rather than non-Indian missionaries and government officials, are taking the lead in lobbying for new laws, serving on Task Forces, and attending Indian education conferences.

American Indians have been plagued by poverty and other social problems. They want political and economic equality, and they want to regain their Native identities, which historically were suppressed in school. Many want to recover their languages and traditions. By recovering the past through a strong sense of identity and by using culturally appropriate curriculum and instruction, many American Indian and Alaska Native students are achieving educational success that heretofore proved elusive.

Today, about 40,000 Native students (10% of the total) attend 170 Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools; 10,000 (3%) attend private schools; and more than 300,000 (87%) attend public schools. However, a disproportionate number of Native students still achieve below national averages in those schools. For example, a 1991 *Audit Report* of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector

General showed students in BIA schools achieving on average far below non-Native students and "generally not receiving quality educations." Bureau-wide average percentiles ranged from a low of the 24th percentile for third- and ninth-grade students to a high of the 32nd percentile for 12th-grade students. In only two out of 153 schools did students average scores at or above the 50th percentile.

The National Longitudinal Study of 1988 found less than 10% of Native eighth-graders testing in the upper quartile in history, mathematics, reading, and science. More than 40% fell into the lowest quartile.

This fastback will examine the current issues in American Indian and Alaska Native education, the status of Indian education today, and the work that Indian leaders and others are doing to improve Indian education.

Historical Overview

Before Columbus and the invasion of Europeans, North American Indian education was geared to teaching children how to survive. Social education taught children their responsibilities to their extended family and the group: the clan, band, or tribe. Vocational education taught children about child rearing, home management, farming, hunting, gathering, fishing, and so forth. Each tribe had its own religion that told the children their place in the cosmos through stories and ceremonies. Members of the extended family taught their children by example, and children copied adult activities as they played.

The European invasions that began in the 15th century brought tremendous changes to the life of Indians. Even more damaging than the aggressive warfare of the Europeans was the introduction of new diseases, such as smallpox and measles, for which the indigenous Americans had no immunities. Another element of the invasion was the missionary impulse of both Catholics and Protestants. Missionaries did not recognize Indian beliefs and cast the Indian religions as the work of the Christian devil. Thus early efforts at Native education by Europeans focused on converting the Indians to Christianity.

The missionaries' demand for total rejection of traditional practices was too much for most Indians to accept. Likewise, the Europeans' racism and ethnocentrism was too ingrained for them to accept the Indians as equals, even if the Indians spoke, dressed, and acted like European colonists. Thus one answer to the "Indian problem" was to eradicate them through wars and to push any survivors westward.

With the establishment of the United States, the federal government was faced with the "Indian problem." To deal with Indians, the government established the Indian Bureau in the War Department in 1824. This office was moved to the Department of Interior in 1849, where it continues to be housed.

Because most pioneers saw Indians as an impediment to progress, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) became a tool to allow more rapid westward expansion. For example, under President Andrew Jackson the government established the Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. Through what is now called "ethnic cleansing," the federal government forced the Cherokee and other southeastern tribes to leave their ancestral homes and to walk a "Trail of Tears" to a new homeland that they were promised they could have forever. However, the westward movement of settlers quickly ended this "final solution" of the Indian problem.

If Indians could not be eradicated or isolated in an Indian territory, then they would have to be civilized. Of some 400 treaties negotiated between tribes and the government before such treaty-making ended in 1871, 120 contained educational provisions to move Indians toward "civilization." Many of these provisions focused on making them farmers. Article 7 of the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie with the Sioux and their allies was typical of the provisions in later treaties:

> In order to insure the civilization of the Indians entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted, especially of such of them as are or may be settled on said agricultural reservations, and they pledge themselves to compel their children, male and female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this stipulation is strictly complied with; and for every thirty children between said ages who can be induced or compelled to attend school, a house shall be provided and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians, and faithfully discharge his or her duties as a teacher.

Schools promised by treaties often were slow in coming, and the quality of the schools that were established was poor. Indians sometimes argued that the schools were set up only to tap into their treaty money. The spoils system of the time led teachers to be hired for their political connections rather than their educational qualifications. Even after Civil Service reforms in 1892, hiring officials did not regard knowledge about Indians as an important professional qualification, since BIA schools were designed to carry out cultural genocide. In the words of Carlisle Indian School founder Captain Richard Pratt, such schools were to "kill the Indian and save the man."

There was a naive belief in the late 19th century that if Indian youth were removed from their parents for just a few years and placed in boarding schools, they could be assimilated into white society, thus solving the "Indian problem." Indian commissioner and Baptist minister Thomas Jefferson Morgan wrote in his 1889 annual report to the President that "the Indian must conform 'to the white man's way,' peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must."

Initially the U.S. government paid for missionaries to educate Indians, mostly using funds promised by treaty to Indians for land cessions. After the Civil War the Catholic Church developed the largest Indian school system in the country by using government funding. Protestants saw the Catholic effort as anti-democratic and fought successfully to end all government funding of mission schools by 1900.

The federal government also developed its own, Protestant-influenced, off-reservation, boarding school system, which began in 1879 with the famous Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. The educational program consisted of one-half day of vocational instruction and one-half day of academic instruction in English and the "three R's." However, instead of melting into white society, most Indians returned from boarding school ill-prepared to live in either white or Indian society.

In the 1920s, a government-commissioned study, the Meriam Report, found many problems with the government's handling of its "wards" and concluded:

> The philosophy underlying the establishment of Indian boarding schools, that the way to "civilize" the Indian is to take Indian children, even very young children, as completely as possible away from their home and family life, is at variance with modern views of education and social work, which regard the home and family as essential social institutions from which it is generally undesirable to uproot children.

The inauguration of Franklin Roosevelt in 1933 ushered in an era of change. President Roosevelt appointed the BIA's most vocal critic, John Collier, as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Collier questioned the materialism of modern American society and valued Indian traditional religions, much to the chagrin of Christian missionaries. Collier battled BIA bureaucracy and his critics for 12 years with modest success. Unfortunately, after his departure near the end of World War II, a conservative reaction set in. The federal government tried to terminate Indian reservations and finalize the cultural assimilation of Indians. Many Indians were relocated to cities on the assumption that jobs were available. But, like the students of earlier generations who were sent off to boarding schools, many of these Indian workers later returned to their reservations.

Some who stayed in cities, as well as some who returned to the reservations, were radicalized in the urban experience. The American Indian Movement began in the 1960s in an effort to stop police brutality in Minneapolis and other cities. An Indian takeover of Alcatraz Island in 1969, a march on Washington and the takeover of the BIA headquarters building in 1972, and a 71-day stand-off and shoot-out with the Federal Bureau of Investigation at Wounded Knee in 1973 were all part of the radical Indian Movement before it subsided in the mid-1970s. The end of this radical period was brought about partly through the concerted and sometimes legally questionable efforts of law enforcement agencies to subvert or imprison the movement's leaders.

Self-Determination

Despite reform efforts, the National Study of Indian Education in the late 1960s and the 1969 Senate subcommittee report, *Indian Education: A National Tragedy, a National Challenge*, documented the continued failures of Indian education. Civil rights activists and Indians put forward the idea that since the BIA had not been able to solve the "Indian problem" after more than a century of effort, the government should back off and offer assistance to tribes who would work to solve their own problems. In a special message on Indian affairs delivered on 8 July 1970 to Congress, President Richard Nixon declared:

> The story of the Indian in America is something more than the record of the white man's frequent aggression, broken agreements, intermittent remorse and prolonged failure. It is a record also of endurance, of survival, of adaptation and creativity in the face of overwhelming obstacles. It is a record of enormous contributions to this country – to its art and culture, to its strength and spirit, to its sense of history and its sense of purpose.
>
> It is long past time that the Indian policies of the Federal government began to recognize and build upon the capacities and insights of the Indian people. Both as a matter of justice and as a matter of enlightened social policy, we must begin to act on the basis of what the Indians themselves have long been telling us. The time has come to break decisively with the past and to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions.

In this message, Nixon recognized the Native aspirations for self-government that had led to the founding of Rough Rock Demonstration School in 1966, the first Native-controlled school in modern times, and Navajo Community College in 1968, the first tribal college. Self-determination was further operationalized with regard to education by the passage of the Indian Education Act in 1972 and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act in 1975.

The Indian Education Act provides money for special programs for Indian children on and off reservations, while the Self-Determination Act allows tribes and Indian organizations to take over and run BIA programs, including BIA schools. Despite seriously inadequate funding, by 1992 the BIA was supporting 22 tribally controlled community colleges and 84 elementary and secondary schools operated by Indian tribes and tribal organizations. Canada has even more schools operated by "First Nations." These colleges and schools have not completely turned around Native education, but they have certainly moved in the direction of giving Indian education back to Indians.

Indian Nations at Risk Task Force

Despite the changes brought about by the Self-Determination Act, testimony gathered at the U.S. Secretary of Education's Indian Nations at Risk Task Force hearings in 1990 and 1991 indicated that many Native students still attend schools with "an unfriendly school climate that fails to promote appropriate academic, social, cultural, and spiritual development among many Native students." Such schools also tended to exhibit a Eurocentric curriculum, low teacher expectations, "a lack of Native educators as role models," and "overt and subtle racism." These factors contributed to Native students having the highest high school dropout rate (36%) of any minority group in the United States.

On the brighter side, the task force found that "schools that respect and support a student's language and culture are significantly more successful in educating those students." In the process of gathering information,

> The Task Force learned that there is a direct relationship between students' understanding of their culture and role in society and their ability to function comfortably in society and to achieve academic success. When students' relationships with the larger society are strained, their chances for academic success appear to diminish. . . .
>
> Often schools have failed to make clear to students the connection between what they learn in school and what they must know to live comfortably and contribute to society.

The task force recommended "establishing the promotion of students' tribal language and culture as a responsibility of the school" and the "training of Native teachers to increase the number of Indian educators and other professionals." Furthermore, they recommended that school officials and educators "integrate the contemporary, historical, and cultural perspectives of American Indians" and "give education a multicultural focus to eliminate racism and promote understanding among all races."

State governments were encouraged to "allocate specific funding for schools serving Native children to develop and use linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate curricula"; and the federal government was asked to "seek legislation to authorize the establishment of a national research and school improvement center for Native education." In addition, colleges and universities needed to "encourage scholarly work on curricula and textbook development that incorporates Native perspectives."

Schools

The task force looked at a variety of schools serving American Indians today. There are BIA boarding and day schools, now increasingly under local control but still tied up with myriad government regulations; tribally controlled schools operated under contracts and grants from the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and mission schools operated by various churches. Public schools serve the largest number of Native students and tend to look like public schools anywhere, even when they are located on Indian reservations. While Indians have taken over reservation boards of education and have established cultural centers and Native studies programs, these changes tend to be peripheral to basic state-mandated curricula.

However, recent changes in certification and curriculum standards in some states are beginning to make a difference. For example, Arizona has instituted a model bilingual teaching endorsement that requires a course in linguistics, a methods course taught in the student's

first language, a course in community involvement, and one in the foundations of bilingual education. In addition, Arizona requires all students to learn a second language by the end of eighth grade.

Taking advantage of these changes and the Navajo Tribe's mandate for Navajo instruction, Tuba City Public Schools in Arizona have instituted a Navajo-English bilingual program. The program was initiated for first-grade students in 1992-93 and includes one-half day immersed in a Navajo-language classroom and one-half day immersed in an English-language classroom. Second and third grades continue to be half Navajo and half English.

The school emphasizes language development using whole-language activities, including thematic units, that integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing in both languages. First-grade thematic units include family, food, clothing, seasons, animals, plants, and so forth. Students write booklets, do language immersion activities, and use language informally. Preliminary results show that students' English writing skills are better as a result of the bilingual program than the skills of students who learned in the traditional English-only program.

The most innovative approach to Native education has been the development of "survival schools." These small schools, enrolling only a tiny fraction of the Indian student population, were first established in urban areas in the 1970s to help Indian delinquents adjust to white society without losing in their heritage. Similar schools appeared in the 1980s. For example, the American Indian Movement supported Yellow Thunder Camp in the Black Hills, which taught a more radically Native curriculum. In the 1990s, schools like the Mohawk's Akwesasne Freedom School in upstate New York are developing Native culture and language curricula that reject the individualism, secularism, and materialism of modern America.

Tribal Colleges

One of the most promising trends in Indian education is the growth of the tribal college movement since Navajo Community College

opened its doors in 1969. While this college and others were started because of the low success rate of Native students in mainstream colleges, they also began developing unique tribe-specific curricula. Most of these colleges have received full regional accreditation or are working toward it. Interestingly, the BIA did not initially support the growth of independent tribal colleges.

Not only are tribal colleges teaching students life and work skills, they also are in the vanguard of improving the quality of life on their respective reservations. A two-year study of tribal colleges by the Carnegie Foundation concluded, "The idea of Indian-controlled colleges offers great hope to the Native American community and the nation as a whole."

Tribal colleges are moving to become more than just community colleges. In South Dakota, Sinte Gleska University and Oglala Lakota College already have four-year teacher preparation programs. Sinte Gleska has graduated more than 40 certified teachers and also offers master's degrees in education. Both Navajo Community College in Arizona and Haskell Indian Nation University in Kansas are in the advanced stages of developing teacher education programs.

Validating Native Culture

In *Light of the Feather: Pathways Through Contemporary Indian America* (1992), author Mick Fedullo tells of his experiences as an educational consultant in Indian schools. He gives examples of American Indian resistance to white culture and intercultural differences. He quotes an Apache elder who says that the students' parents:

> . . . had been to school in their day, and what that usually meant was a bad BIA boarding school. And all they remember about school is that there were all these Anglos trying to make them forget they were Apaches; trying to make them turn against their parents, telling them that Indian ways were evil.
>
> Well, a lot of those kids came to believe that their teachers were the evil ones, and so anything that had to do with "education" was also evil – like books. Those kids came back to the reservation, got married, and had their own kids. And now they don't want anything to do with the white man's education. The only reason they send their kids to school is because it's the law. But they tell their kids not to take school seriously.

The cost to the student of rejecting the school's language and culture is a loss of future academic and occupational opportunities. However, the alternative of rejecting one's home language and culture can lead to tragic consequences, as students become increasingly unable to communicate with their parents. Lilly Wong Fillmore of the University of California at Berkeley writes:

> What is lost is no less than the means by which parents socialize their children. When parents are unable to talk to their children, they cannot easily convey to them their values, beliefs, understandings, or wisdom about how to cope with their experiences. They cannot teach them about the meaning of work, or about personal responsibility, or what it means to be a moral or ethical person in a world with too many choices and too few guideposts to follow.

Another tragic consequence of the failure of educators to appreciate Indian languages and cultures is the over-identification of Native children as learning disabled and mentally retarded. These labels usually are based on assessments by monolingual, monocultural school psychologists using tests and other instruments that measure English-language ability and familiarity with mainstream American culture.

Native students today vary from traditional to assimilated. Some are bicultural, capable of moving back and forth from white to traditional Indian culture. Because of the tremendous variation among Indians of different tribes and different degrees of assimilation into the dominant culture, it is impossible to study "the Indian" and determine "the best" instructional approach for all. The many variations among Indian students means that a variety of methods should be employed.

Teachers can demonstrate that they care about students' backgrounds and support their families' values by modeling learning for their students. They can learn about the home culture of their students through home and community visits and by reading relevant ethnographic literature. They then can use this knowledge to change their teaching methods and to use classroom activities that will better motivate their students. On reservations this strategy has been called "crossing the cattle guard," referring to leaving the fenced compounds in which teachers live next to the schools. Native families see teachers' participation in such Native activities as powwows as affirming the teachers' respect and concern for their students.

To be successful, educators must overcome their students' resistance to education and master the art of intercultural communication.

To overcome that resistance, Jim Cummins of the Ontario Institute for Educational Studies found that educators must involve parents in running the school. The school's curriculum needs to reflect the cultural background of the students; thus experiential and interactive teaching methods need to be used. Testing must be used to help students learn effectively, rather than to sort and label students. If teachers take this approach, they will be employing a bilingual-additive, "English Plus" methodology, which contrasts dramatically with the traditional assimilationist approach.

Teacher Training

For many years, special training to teach Native students was considered unimportant. When I started teaching Navajo sixth-graders in 1971, state certification requirements did not mandate any training in Native education. I was lucky enough to start teaching near the first tribal college, which had recently opened its doors. Thus I was able to begin to learn about Navajos and the unique requirements of cross-cultural education.

Culture determines our understanding of the world, patterns our social interactions, and shapes our tastes in food, music, clothing, color, and other matters. Furthermore, we take most of this cultural knowledge for granted. When students behave in terms of the same basic cultural knowledge we acquired while growing up, then we consider their behavior normal. However, if students act differently because they grew up in a different culture, we tend to consider their behavior as abnormal or bad. Teachers need to understand the dynamics of how children are socialized both into their home culture and into the school culture. And teachers need to help students think about culture and how it shapes their lives.

Many teachers erroneously assume that they can accurately assess the learning of Native students by using standard English-language tests. As a result, many Native students are labeled as learning disabled, or worse, and then subjected to prescriptive remedial education, often in special education or Chapter I programs. In these

programs the curriculum often is broken into a linear series of discrete, "basic" skills that are taught in a behavioristic way. This offers little of value to Native students, since it fails to match their learning styles. In fact, such programs virtually guarantee continued failure to learn.

Needed are meaningful curriculum materials and culturally appropriate ways to teach and motivate students by building on the cultural knowledge that students bring to school. This new focus will lessen the cultural discontinuity between home and school that results in the disproportionate school failure of Native students.

Sociocultural and Historical Foundations

First, teachers of Native students need an understanding of the findings of anthropology, sociology, and history. This need has long been recognized by those who have carefully studied Indian education. For example, Robert Havighurst, who directed the National Study of Indian Education from 1967 to 1971, found evidence to suggest that "teachers of Indian children should be systematically trained to take account of the sociocultural processes operating in the communities and classrooms where they work." Teachers of Native students must appreciate the influence of culture. This includes the background and meaning of such concepts as ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, assimilation, and acculturation. This foundation also will allow Native teachers to explain the non-Native world to their students.

Teachers of Native students also need to know the historical background of Native education. Most often they will not get this information in standard education histories; it is not unusual in those histories to find no mention at all of Native education. Many different approaches to Native education have been tried throughout history. The knowledge of past successes and mistakes will help the new teacher with ideas about what will work and what will not work. In addition, knowing the history of Native education will help the new teacher to sort through the maze of federal Indian education programs

they may encounter in their work and to understand the intent of those programs.

Instructional Methods

Teachers need to be responsive to Native students, their cultures, and how they "learn to learn" at home. Through this sensitivity, teachers can help make their classroom activities reinforce the child-rearing patterns of the Native children's extended families.

One approach is to use experiential and interactive methods. Teachers need to get students out of lecture halls and textbooks and get them involved in "real" experiences, especially hands-on activities. These kinds of activities correspond to "learning from the land."

The interactive component refers to how teachers listen and respond to the concerns of their students. Many Native Americans tend to be global or holistic learners who think reflectively and respond to visual and tactile stimuli. They learn more effectively through cooperation rather than competition. Traditional curricula and textbooks that approach learning as sequential, linear, and literary or auditory unfortunately focus on Native students' weaknesses instead of their strengths.

Bilingual and ESL Methods

Native students who appear to be proficient in English may have only conversational proficiency rather than the cognitive/academic proficiency required for successful school work. Students with a conversational proficiency can use English in "context-embedded" situations on the playground and in the classroom. In such situations there are many cues on which the student can rely to provide meaning.

However, in "context-reduced" situations (whether it be textbook work, teacher lectures, or other classroom activities requiring higher order, abstract language skills) the conversationally proficient student must be regarded as Limited English Proficient (LEP) and thus at a disadvantage.

Students who speak a Native language well but who are LEP can benefit from teachers trained in bilingual and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teaching methods. In particular, teachers of Native students need a knowledge of both first- and second-language acquisition theories and practices, such as the natural approach and total physical response (TPR). (See fastbacks 278 *How Children Learn a Second Language* and 347 *English as a Second Language: 25 Questions and Answers*.)

Teachers whose Native students have lost their native language need to be familiar with the international research on language restoration. Joshua Fishman in his 1991 book, *Reversing Language Shift*, points out that restoring a language also restores culture and a sense of personal identity. This development of identity and reinforcement of traditional family values is probably the most effective way to combat alcohol and drug abuse and other aspects of cultural disintegration.

One promising solution to the problem of the loss of family and cultural identity has been pioneered in New Zealand for the past decade by the Maoris, the original inhabitants of New Zealand. It is called Kohanga Reo, or language nest. Language nests are community-based day-care centers that use the Maori language and are staffed with Maori elders. Language nests preserve the Maori language, provide a valuable service to working parents, and, most important, strengthen the cultural values associated with the traditional Maori extended family. Language nests also are being successfully pioneered in Hawaii with native Hawaiian children.

"Nativizing" the Curriculum

American education is dominated by textbooks. While the education of all students should be less controlled by textbooks, it is especially critical for cultural minorities that textbook instruction be de-emphasized and supplemented. Commercial curriculum materials often are irrelevant to minority students because these materials are written from the dominant culture's point of view. Consequently, such

materials do not relate to the students' experiential background. The message to students from teachers who use only commercial materials and who are not responsive to the sociocultural background of their students is that the culture of the school is more important than the students' home culture. This attitude is a form of cultural imperialism.

Teachers need to encourage school librarians, administrators, and school boards to acquire supplemental curriculum materials appropriate to their students' backgrounds. They need to learn about both oral and written Native literature that is suitable for classroom use, how to integrate Native history and government into the social studies curriculum, and how to use ethnically sensitive science and mathematics in their classrooms. For example, at Sinte Gleska University, students are taught to develop culturally relevant, thematic, and holistic units that address learning styles and cultural values.

Changing the curriculum to reflect the culture of Native students can help create meaning for students who often do not see school as meaningful. In addition, teachers will have more success if they emphasize comprehension rather than surface forms of language, such as pronunciation and spelling. Of course, if the surface forms get in the way of comprehension, they must be addressed.

Students need to relate what they are being taught to their prior knowledge and experience. This can be done most successfully when new material is presented in a narrative or story form. In addition, the more senses that can be targeted in presenting the story or lesson, the more chance the Native student has for comprehension.

Whole Language

A whole-language approach can foster higher-level thinking. For example, students can interview tribal elders, elected officials, and others in their native language. They then can write their own texts. This interviewing and reporting process can produce social studies materials about the community and, at the same time, develop students' speaking and writing skills in both tribal languages and Eng-

lish. It also can produce local versions of traditional stories for students to read. Whole-language teachers also can incorporate native-language instruction through language-experience stories and various student writing activities. Such instruction leads naturally to integrating content areas into holistic and meaningful units of study.

T.L. McCarty of the University of Arizona observed a thematic unit in a classroom on the Navajo Reservation. The students read Scott O'Dell's historical novel about the Navajos, *Sing Down the Moon*. Students responded to the book in journals and then were asked what more they wanted to do to learn about the historical period in which the book was set. Some students chose to interview elders, in Navajo, about the "Long Walk of the Navajos" and compiled a local history of the event. Others researched colonization and why the people went to war. Another group rewrote pertinent passages in their history texts to represent the Navajo point of view (McCarty and Schaffer 1992).

Thematic units like this one provide students with real reasons for putting their reading, writing, and other academic skills to work. Students learn about the interesting world in which they live and explore their relationship to it in active, participatory ways. The possibilities for developing similar units are limited only by students' interests and teachers' willingness to participate in and facilitate their students' learning.

Whole Mathematics

"Whole mathematics" is a language-oriented approach to teaching mathematics. Teachers use a variety of methods to help students put mathematical concepts into language. These methods include "direct use," such as copying information from the board; linguistic translation, such as translating a mathematical formula into a complete sentence; summarizing and interpreting, such as explaining in writing how a problem was solved; applied use, such as students writing their own story problems; and creative use, such as having students write

a report on a math project. As in whole language, writing activities work better if students write for a larger audience than just the teacher. This extended audience can include classmates, younger students, parents, and others.

American Indian students who do well in adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing often fail when it comes to solving story problems that add a reading dimension to mathematics. There is a downward trend in the scores of Indian students on standardized tests in the upper elementary grades, where solving story problems becomes more important. In the primary grades, students should write story problems relevant to the world around them. That will help them understand what story problems are all about, will help develop their language skills, and will give them an understanding of the real-world applications of mathematics (Davison and Pearce 1992).

A coordinated program to help Native students succeed with story problems should include these activities:

- Students observe how math is used all around them and discuss and write about the importance of mathematics.
- Students discuss and write about the mathematical processes they use in specific cases.
- Students explain, orally and in writing, their use of manipulatives to solve textbook mathematics problems.
- Teachers show students problems using just manipulatives and no numbers.
- Students make up problems in which manipulatives can be used.
- Students make up story problems that use the mathematical operations they have studied.

Examples of related language-development activities include journal writing, vocabulary development, letter writing, and mini-mathematics projects. Students can keep mathematics journals in which they write their own definitions of new mathematical terms and communicate with the teacher. An example of a mini-mathematics project

is for students to gather public opinion on a particular question and then to graph the responses. Such a project involves students in selecting a topic of interest, developing a questionnaire, interviewing people, and tallying, tabulating, and reporting their results.

Native Students at Risk

The final report of the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force documented that about one-third of Native students never finish high school. The review of research commissioned by the task force identified seven school-based reasons why Native students drop out of school:

1. Large schools that present students with an impersonal education.
2. The perception that teachers do not care about Native students.
3. Passive, "transmission" teaching methods.
4. Inappropriate curriculum designed for mainstream America.
5. The use of culturally biased tests that lead to poor scores by Native students.
6. Tracking Native students into low-achieving classes and groups.
7. Lack of Native parent involvement.

The most frequent reason Navajo dropouts gave for leaving school was that they were bored. A 1986 study commissioned by the Navajo Tribe found that the top three reasons dropouts gave for leaving school were: 1) bored with school (20.5%), 2) problems with other students (15.5%), and 3) retained in grade due to absenteeism (14.2%). The same study found that 37% of those who *planned* to drop out of school also reported being bored with school, while 29% planned to drop out because they had flunked classes due to absen-

teeism as well as academic failure. Only 8% specifically gave academic failure as a reason (Brandt 1992).

A number of studies show that dropouts, Indian and non-Indian alike, perceive their teachers as uncaring. In a recent study of Indian dropouts published in the January 1992 issue of the *Journal of American Indian Education*, Donna Deyhle quotes a Native student:

> The way I see it seems like the whites don't want to get involved with the Indians. They think we're bad. We drink. Our families drink. Dirty. Ugly. And the teachers don't want to help us. They say, 'Oh, no, there is another Indian asking a question' because they don't understand. So we stop asking questions.

By interviewing dropouts and observing classrooms, Deyhle found that Navajo and Ute students did not have the academic language skills, specifically reading, to be able to do the required classroom work, such as reading the textbook and answering questions at the end of the chapter. This common type of classwork bores students when they have the academic language skills to perform it, but it is especially boring when students cannot read well enough to do the assignment.

Typically, the remedial help this type of student gets in special education and Chapter 1 classrooms breaks the content down into smaller pieces and allows students more time to complete an assignment. This form of instruction can increase student boredom. Also, such remediation takes students out of mathematics, science, and other classes, causing them to miss valuable instruction in other subjects.

Combatting Substance Abuse

While research does not indicate that alcohol and drug abuse are major reasons for students dropping out of school, alcohol long has disrupted American Indian societies. Most efforts to reduce substance abuse have not been successful, but a few new approaches show promise. One such approach was developed by the Alkalai Lake Band in

British Columbia. Their focus is a community effort that draws on Indian traditional cultures to combat substance abuse.

In another effort, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Montana have established a treatment center at Blue Bay. The center operates on the following healing principles:

1. The solution for the problems with alcohol and substance abuse must come from within the communities.
2. Abusers must discover the life-preserving, life-enhancing values of traditional culture.
3. An ongoing learning process is required.
4. The well-being of the individual is inseparable from the well-being of the community.

Their treatment program emphasizes peer support for sobriety, helping other tribes, identifying cultural attributes that may promote drug abuse, and optimism.

At Chinle High School on the Navajo Nation, students volunteer to take a class where they learn leadership and peer-counseling skills. These students then apply those skills by helping classmates with drug and alcohol problems.

A key element in all of these programs is peer involvement and cooperation, an attitude that, in itself, reflects traditional Native values.

The Future of American Indian/ Alaska Native Education

On 30 October 1990, President Bush signed the Native American Languages Act, Title I of Public Law 101-477. Congress stated in this Act that "the status of the cultures and languages of Native Americans is unique and the United States has the responsibility to act together with Native Americans to ensure the survival of these unique cultures and languages." Congress made it the policy of the United States to "preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages" and recognized "the right of Indian tribes and other Native American governing bodies to use the Native American languages as a medium of instruction in all schools funded by the Secretary of the Interior." Furthermore, the act declared that "the right of Native Americans to express themselves through the use of Native American languages shall not be restricted in any public proceeding, including publicly supported education programs."

The Native American Languages Act is the fulfillment of Native desires so eloquently expressed in such documents as the 1985 education policies of the U.S.'s largest reservation-based tribe, the Navajo Nation. The Navajo policies called for local control, parental involvement, and Navajo language instruction in the belief that:

> The Navajo language is an essential element of the life, culture, and identity of the Navajo people. The Navajo Nation recognizes the im-

portance of preserving and perpetuating that language to the survival of the Nation. Instruction in the Navajo language shall be made available for all grade levels in all schools serving the Navajo Nation.

After centuries of minority language repression worldwide, researchers are finding that bilingualism is an asset rather than a handicap. It is not necessary to forget a home language in order to learn a second "school" language and be academically successful. However, it does take time – about two years to become conversationally proficient and six to seven years to become fully (that is, academically) competent in a second language. With well-designed bilingual instruction, such as that carried out at Rock Point Community School, students can learn academic subjects successfully in their native language while developing near-native fluency in English.

The Indian Nations at Risk Task Force declared four national priorities: 1) developing parent-based and culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate early childhood education; 2) making the promotion of students' tribal language and culture a responsibility of the school; 3) training more Native teachers; and 4) strengthening tribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs colleges. In addition, they adopted 10 national Indian education goals:

Goal 1: Readiness for School. By the year 2000 all Native children will have access to early childhood education programs that provide the language, social, physical, spiritual, and cultural foundations they need to succeed in school and to reach their full potential as adults.

Goal 2: Maintain Native Languages and Cultures. By the year 2000 all schools will offer Native students the opportunity to maintain and develop their tribal languages and will create a multicultural environment that enhances the many cultures represented in the school.

Goal 3: Literacy. By the year 2000 all Native children in school will be literate in the language skills appropriate for their individual levels of development. They will be competent in their English oral, reading, listening, and writing skills.

Goal 4: Student Academic Achievement. By the year 2000 every Native student will demonstrate mastery of English, mathematics, science, history, geography, and other challenging academic skills necessary for an educated citizenry.

Goal 5: High School Graduation. By the year 2000 all Native students capable of completing high school will graduate. They will demonstrate civic, social, creative, and critical thinking skills necessary for ethical, moral, and responsible citizenship and important in modern tribal, national, and world societies.

Goal 6: High Quality Native and Non-Native School Personnel. By the year 2000 the numbers of Native educators will double, and the colleges and universities that train the nation's teachers will develop a curriculum that prepares teachers to work effectively with the variety of cultures, including the Native cultures that are served by schools.

Goal 7: Safe and Alcohol-Free and Drug-Free Schools. By the year 2000 every school responsible for educating Native students will be free of alcohol and drugs and will provide safe facilities and an environment conducive to learning.

Goal 8: Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. By the year 2000 every Native adult will have the opportunity to be literate and to obtain the necessary academic, vocational, and technical skills and knowledge needed to gain meaningful employment and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of tribal and national citizenship.

Goal 9: Restructuring Schools. By the year 2000 schools serving Native children will be restructured to effectively meet the academic, cultural, spiritual, and social needs of students for developing strong, healthy, self-sufficient communities.

Goal 10: Parental, Community, and Tribal Partnerships. By the year 2000 every school responsible for educating Native students will provide opportunities for Native parents and tribal leaders to help plan and evaluate the governance, operation, and performance of their educational programs. (Indian Nations at Risk Task Force 1991)

The first-ever White House Conference on Indian Education was held in 1992 in Washington, D.C. More than 230 delegates, mostly Natives, were selected by Congress and the President from across

the United States and met for three days to discuss ways to improve Native education. The conference delegates explored the feasibility of a national Board of Indian Education and a national Indian university and developed recommendations for the improvement of education programs relevant to the needs of Indians.

The delegates did not support a national board for Indian education, fearing centralized, bureaucratic control of the extremely diverse tribes and schools. And the conference divided over supporting a national Indian university, partly because tribal colleges fear losing already scarce resources that could be diverted to support such an institution. But the White House conference delegates did adopt 113 resolutions, covering topics ranging from the governance of Indian education to safe, alcohol- and drug-free schools. Resolutions also called on the President and Congress "to strengthen and increase support for the language and culture of American Indians and Alaska Natives."

Worldwide, the survival of indigenous peoples and their cultures is a compelling political issue. The breakup of the Soviet Union testifies, in part, to the strong claims that minorities make for self-determination. Elsewhere, Kurds, Basques, and other indigenous groups demand independence.

The continued poverty and social problems of these minority groups are linked to their political disempowerment and minority status. In addition, the practice of using teachers and schools to destroy minority cultures and to indoctrinate children into mainstream cultures is a travesty of what education should be.

The United Nations recognized both the predicament and aspirations of indigenous minorities by declaring 1993 the "International Year for the World's Indigenous People." The current policy of Indian self-determination in the United States, while not perfect, approaches the ideal of freedom and cultural democracy envisioned in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Tribal schools and colleges are helping to change the negative environment

on many reservations to one of hope. And the renewal of traditional Native cultures in and out of school is re-establishing a sense of community and fighting the materialistic, hedonistic, and individualistic forces of the popular culture.

American Indian and Alaska Native concerns about land, culture, and community are concerns that all Americans need to share if we are to ensure a bright future for all of our children.

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Journal of American Indian Education. Center for Indian Education, College of Education, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-1311. (Triennial)

Journal of Navajo Education. Kayenta Unified School District, P.O. Box 337, Kayenta, AZ 86033-0337. (Triennial)

Native Peoples. Media Concepts Group, 5333 North 7th St., Suite C224, Phoenix, AZ 85014. Teachers guide available. (Quarterly)

Tribal College: Journal of American Indian Higher Education. P.O. Box 898, Chestertown, MD 21620. (Quarterly)

Organizations

American Indian Science and Engineering Society, 1630 30th St., Suite 301, Boulder, CO 80301. Has chapters in high schools and colleges to promote math and science achievement among American Indians. Publishes *Winds of Change*.

National Indian Education Association, 1819 H. Street, N.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20006. Lobbies Congress on behalf of Indian education and holds annual conferences with Indian education workshops. Has state affiliates.

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The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation was established on 13 October 1966 with the signing, by Dr. George H. Reavis, of the irrevocable trust agreement creating the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation Trust.

George H. Reavis (1883-1970) entered the education profession after graduating from Warrensburg Missouri State Teachers College in 1906 and the University of Missouri in 1911. He went on to earn an M.A. and a Ph.D. at Columbia University. Dr. Reavis served as assistant superintendent of schools in Maryland and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1929 he was appointed director of instruction for the Ohio State Department of Education. But it was as assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in the Cincinnati public schools (1939-48) that he rose to national prominence.

Dr. Reavis' dream for the Educational Foundation was to make it possible for seasoned educators to write and publish the wisdom they had acquired over a lifetime of professional activity. He wanted educators and the general public to "better understand (1) the nature of the educative process and (2) the relation of education to human welfare."

The Phi Delta Kappa fastbacks were begun in 1972. These publications, along with monographs and books on a wide range of topics related to education, are the realization of that dream.

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